

# THE JOURNAL

BOOK CLUB OF WASHINGTON \* FALL 2019





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Cover image: Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. *The Amazing Spider-Man* #33. *The Final Chapter!*, vol. 1 no. 33, Marvel Comics, February 1966. One of Cole Duke-Bruechert's favorite items in his collection of comic books, (see article, page 6). This story is heavily focused on failure, and the cover depicts the experience of hopelessness. Spider-Man is pinned under rubble, water rising, seconds away from quitting and accepting his defeat. Read more in Cole's article about the insight and influence of this often disregarded, yet powerful, medium.

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## EDITOR'S NOTES ON THIS ISSUE

*David Wertheimer*

Can you recall the first book that caught your attention? Perhaps it was a favorite bedtime story that an exhausted parent read to help you find the calm before sleep. (For me, that would have been *Little Bear*, by Elsa Holmelund Minarik, with magical illustrations by Maurice Sendak.) Perhaps it was the first book you read all by yourself, or the first book you used your meager allowance to purchase from a neighborhood shop. It's fun to think back on how books became a powerful presence in one's life, and how we started down the path that turned us into bibliophiles and collectors, often to the amusement or even concern of our families and friends. It's equally interesting to ponder why particular topics or genres of literature piqued our interests and became the cornerstone of our collections.

This was a fun issue of *The Journal* to assemble for our readers. The articles here reflect the lifecycle of book collecting and book collectors. Nicolas ("Cole") Duke-Bruechert's essay on his collection of surprisingly relevant comic books provides a wonderful view into a collector early in his career. The award winning essay from the 2019 First Place/Single Collector Award made jointly by the Book Club of Washington and the Collins Memorial Library Book Collecting Contest at Puget Sound University, Cole explores why the persona of certain comic book characters are so potent, and carry vital messages to their fans—especially during difficult or turbulent political times. It's was a pleasure to read Cole's essay, and examine examples of the artistic components of this powerful medium that accompanied his essay.

Derek Wilson provides a glimpse into the world of an long-established collector, facing the crisis of a windstorm and a fallen tree on his home that puts a cherished collection of books about his beloved local mountains at risk of being lost forever. As I read his short essay, it made me wonder: If my home and my library were at risk, and I had only a few minutes to save a handful of my books, which volumes would I take with me? What tomes in my own library mean the most to me, and which would I be willing to leave behind, with the possibility of never seeing them again?

At a point even further down the lifecycle of a collector and collection, Ellen Wertheimer, a law professor from Pennsylvania (and—true confessions—this editor's sister), describes the challenges of seeking homes for decades of accumulated books as she enters a phase of life familiar to many of us, during which we begin to downsize our lives and divest of our collections. It is frustrating to realize that with the passing of time and the

emergence of new technologies, many in the younger generation have neither the interest or space to take on vast shelves of printed books. With the emergence of the internet and the availability of e-books, the future of what older generations considered an essential component of an informed and well-read household may no longer hold value or importance to those who come after us. A difficult, and at times painful, truth.

Alternatively, Brian Thompson and David Schlitt, from the University of Washington and Western Washington University, respectively, provide scholarly insights into the importance of book collections that come together through unique, convoluted histories (including in the case of early Jewish printed texts, periods of censorship, condemnation and deliberate destruction), eventually finding secure, permanent homes in institutional libraries. In these collections, centuries of information and wisdom are assembled in a fashion that allows students, scholars, and ordinary people such as myself to trace the evolution of scientific knowledge, spirituality and literature—and demonstrate the ways in which that knowledge is preserved and passed down across the centuries.

From my perspective, immortality means little more than how long a person's thoughts and ideas live on after their deaths. Books can be part of that immortality, providing somewhat indelible markers of individual lives, and the thoughts and actions of individual thinkers and actors in the world. This immortality can belong to the cartoonists who created superheroes that inspire generations of impressionable young minds, the novelists whose stories inform how we think about relationships and the world, scientists whose experiments and hypotheses evolve and shape the ways we think and the extent to which we understand the world around us, or the sometimes anonymous religious scholars who formulated the key texts of a tradition over multiple centuries.

Whether we are toddlers curled up with a parent reading *Little Bear* before bedtime, teenagers reading about Spiderman's epic battles against the forces evil, young adults exploring the adventurous tales of Alexander Dumas and the mysteries of Rex Stout, or scholars pouring over the scientific discoveries of Carl Linnaeus or 15<sup>th</sup> century pre-Enlightenment Hebrew texts, books expand our horizons and pull us into the orbits of ideas and thinkers that are often long-gone, but not yet forgotten. That is the magic of the printed word. And perhaps that is why we are motivated to collect, and seek to ensure that what we have collected can be preserved, understood and appreciated by others, even long after we ourselves are gone.

**David Wertheimer, Editor, *The Journal of the Book Club of Washington***



## WHY DO WE FALL?

*Nicholas (“Cole”) Duke-Bruechert*

Editor’s note: Nicholas (“Cole”) Duke-Bruechert, a student at the University of Puget Sound (UPS) in Tacoma, received the 2019 First Place, or Single Collector Award, sponsored jointly by the Book Club of Washington and The Collins Memorial Library. This award acknowledges the combination of an excellent, integrated and comprehensive essay, a well annotated bibliography, collection images, and a thoughtful wish list.

The “Incomplete Collection” of Superhero comic books is a creative way to explore failure. Here the collector has taken something we all face in our daily lives, and through his essay and descriptive bibliography explained how superheroes survived failure. The collection essay captures the initial efforts of the collector, particularly his draw to The Amazing Spider-Man issue #96. The name of the collection leaves plenty of room for the Collector to expand on the “failure” theme, as well as others that can be drawn from comic books. This collection successfully uses comic books to explore a timeless theme—failure and how to learn from experience. The collector has done an especially good job of articulating the importance of the collection to him, discussing how it relates to his own struggles and work ethic.

“I’m here to fight for truth, justice, and the American way.”<sup>1</sup> These famous words, spoken by Christopher Reeve while playing Superman, sum up what an American superhero is: fallible and imperfect. The use of the verb “fight” suggests that failure is not only possible, but probable. Failure is the very outcome being fought against. Thus in the struggle for success, failure defines a hero. It makes them noble people fighting for good rather than tyrants banning actions they deem unjust. Superman has the power to be a tyrant, yet he chooses to fight for the common good—he chooses to be vulnerable to failure. Superman’s power and corresponding vulnerability are a result of his alien status, a trait that can be seen in Action Comics #987. This issue features a panel depicting The Man of Steel shielding a group of Mexican immigrants from gunfire coming from a vengeful white supremacist. Superman uses his powerful-alien status to protect powerless “alien” migrants, becoming vulnerable to failure in the process.

Superheroes can fail. Superheroes do fail. The most well-written superheroes are those that have the lowest chance of success, and it’s no coincidence that Batman and Spider-Man are among the most popular in the world. Both characters have an extensive rogues gallery with formidable foes that challenge

them constantly, providing them countless opportunities to fail. I started this collection because I am fascinated with failure. I believe that in order to succeed, we must first understand why we have failed, learn from the experience, and try again. None are more adept at this practice than superheroes. The Incomplete Collection is meant to serve the purpose of protecting these books for display and public use in a future library dedicated to the medium of comic books and graphic novels. The name itself is reflective of what the collection seeks to assert: an individual or group should continuously attempt to improve. There is always something to be learned from failure, even if it's just a reminder of humanity's infallibility. The collection reminds those viewing it to explore failure and discover success.

The Incomplete Collection was started through the means of back breaking labor and caffeine. I began collecting comic books in 2012 after stumbling upon a case of them on display at my local Half-Priced Books. I was drawn to an issue of The Amazing Spider-Man, more specifically #96. It implored to be bought—a beautiful cover vibrantly featuring Spider-Man in a spotlight, his mask hidden behind his arm in ostensible defeat while being persecuted by the police. In 2016 I began to get serious about collecting comic books, and needed money to expand the collection. I got a job at a burger joint that paid \$9.50 an hour. I worked 25 hours a week and slept for 5 hours between school days. I would bike home with my fingernails crusted over in salt and grease, shower, and then wake up at 5 am to work out with my Fire Academy class. I hated it, but the comic books that arrived every couple weeks made the pain bearable.

Effervescent covers oozing with defeat drawn by Steve Ditko and John Romita filled my room as I persevered through flipping burgers and working the fryer. Comic books provided escape from my mundane life and gave me something to aspire to be—a hero effecting change. While I didn't necessarily fail at the job in the traditional sense, as I ended up quitting, I did fail to realize my worth as a person. Comic books helped me reach this conclusion, showing me that a kid dedicated enough to work 65 hours a week (including school) not only could aspire to be more, but has the responsibility to society to do so. I rose to the occasion and created a babysitting empire in my neighborhood. I utilized the knowledge I gleaned from comic books and my love of superheroes to entrance kids and make money, further expanding the collection to delve into the reasons for a superhero's failure—villainy. I am extremely fortunate to have the opportunity to generate the means of acquiring such a collection. These books can range anywhere from \$20 for modern books to \$600 for those from the 1960's. I believe everyone should be able to enjoy this collection simply because it revolves around a staple of the human experience--failure.

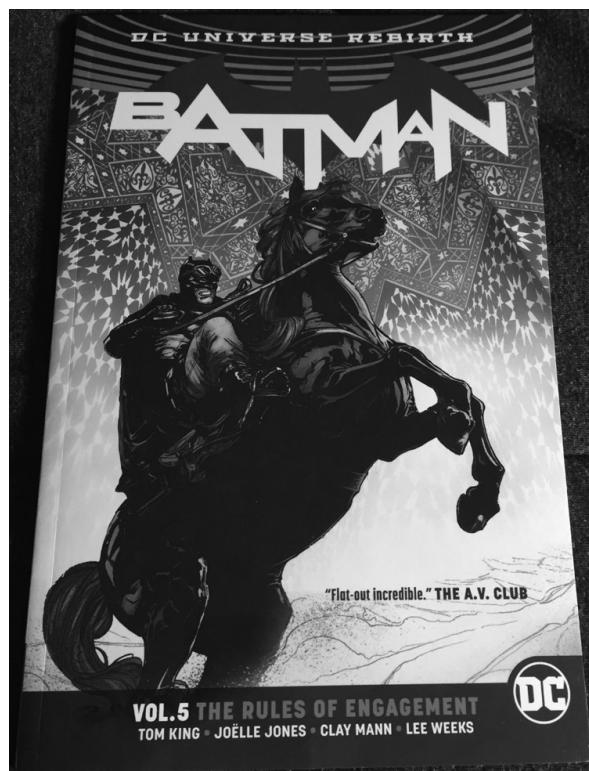
The history of comic books can be broadly summed up as the increasing reliance on the moral ambiguity of established characters' actions. In the 1930's-60's most stories had little impact on society, they were usually self-contained arcs and had nothing too notable to say. The issues in this collection that were published and/or written in this time period provide commentary on how to grow from failure, and why failure, when used correctly, can breed success. In the 70's through August of 2001, comic books began picking up steam as societal allegories and ways of expressing frustration. The issues in this collection from this era can be viewed as ways to escape from a world of increasing political action. After September of 2001, comic books began depicting an increase in ideological battles, with no clear "correct" answer. How these particular modern age books deal with conflict is of interest to me, as it provides a definition of failure that I feel most people can relate to—that of uncertainty.

All of the modern issues in this collection explore the ambiguities of terms such as hero and villain and serve to show that failure, when used to define outcomes in this era, needs to be separated from its negative connotation. Failure can be a beautiful and unifying force, especially when experienced by society as whole. The collection is put together to demonstrate how comic books progress with commonly held views and aspirations of society. Society is imperfect. Failure is always an option. I have made it a point to protect these works until they can be properly displayed and shared with the public. As Harrison Ford's Indiana Jones would say, "This belongs in a museum."<sup>2</sup>

## Annotated Bibliography

### 1. King, Tom and Jones, Joëlle. "Batman" Rules of Engagement, vol. 5, DC Comics, 2018

The basis for this story is so seemingly obvious it's a wonder why it took nearly 80 years to get written. Superman and Batman go on a double date and it is revealed to the audience that they both think the other nobler than themselves. These two men come to the conclusion that they personally owe it to society to be superheroes and that the other defied odds and chose to be a hero. It's beautiful and explores the power of percep-



tion on why one becomes determined to not fail and be successful. Through this story it can be seen that in everyday life there are plenty of opportunities to acknowledge perseverance and failure-based success.



failing in every aspect except that of saving people as Spider-Man. Electro, an electric-powered super-villain shows up and Spider-Man makes the mistake of touching him, resulting in Spider-Man getting knocked out cold. Everything Peter Parker is, he is now failing at. Peter Parker is not, however, a failure. He uses this pain and re-applies it to his own failures and shortcomings, and in the process reaffirms his identity as a hero. The theme of redemption and perseverance are beautifully interwoven with spectacle in this marvelous 32-page book.

**3. Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. "The Amazing Spider-Man #7." The Return of the Vulture, vol. 1 no. 7, Marvel Comics, December 1963**

In this issue, the Vulture goes through similar processes compared to those that

**2. Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. "The Amazing Spider-Man #9." The Man Called Electro!, vol. 1 no. 9, Marvel Comics, February 1964**

I cannot overstate how beautiful the cover art on this book is, the bright red circle in the left hand corner sending verbal blows in the direction of DC comics and truly illustrating the showmanship inherent in publishing stories about super-powered individuals. This issue depicts the importance of failure in being a productive member of society. Aunt May is hospitalized and Peter is strapped for cash, slowly drowning in school-work, paying the hospital bills, and both taking pictures of and being Spider-Man. Peter Parker is slowly



Peter Parker encounters in issue #9. I think it is particularly important to read these issues out of order (that is read issue 9 before 7), because it establishes to readers unfamiliar with the medium that there is a fine line between hero and villain. Once this is established, it highlights the importance of analyzing characters and their respective actions and motivations to discover what we personally define as noble and good as well as why. Such definitions of good and evil are important to understand as they are usually heavily connoted with success and failure.

**4. Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. "The Amazing Spider-Man #13." The Menace of Mysterio, vol. 1 no. 13, Marvel Comics, June 1964**



The cover art for this comic is magnificent as Ditko utilizes the comic strip at the bottom to intrigue anyone who so much as glances at the cover. This book leans heavily on the importance of honesty, integrity, and autonomy, fleshing out the definition of hero as depicted in issues 9 and 7. Pitting Spider-Man against Mysterio, who is idolized by the press because of his claim that he can defeat Spider-Man, this issue is still relevant today as we struggle to keep the press both free and honest. Thus demonstrating how society can fail morally as a whole due to the failure of individuals to think autonomously.

**5. Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. "The Amazing Spider-Man #5." Marked for Destruction by Dr. Doom!, vol. 1 no. 5, Marvel Comics, October 1963**

Themes of technological and industrial frustration are echoed throughout this story, as Dr. Doom battles Spider-Man before Spider-Man discovers that he's only fighting one of Dr. Doom's robot replicas. It raises the question of whether or not there can be too much advancement in too short of a time period. It also shines light on the ambiguities of evil technology like that of Dr. Doom versus good technology used by heroes like Spidey.



der-Man. In a world where the simple push of a button can turn the planet into a nuclear wasteland, this story invites us to think critically about what we believe the powers of the government should be. It allows the reader to discuss the thesis: as citizens, we should prevent those in power from playing God and instead towards the banning of such destructive technology.

**6. Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. "The Amazing Spider-Man #8." The Terrible Threat of The Living Brain!, vol. 1 no. 8, Marvel Comics, January 1964**

This comic book returns to the theme of technological ambiguity presented in issue number 5, with its central challenge for Spider-Man being a scientific machine turned into a weapon. The Living Brain is introduced as a robotic computer capable of solving any problem given to it, thus it is viewed as infallible. However, like most things that have absolute power, it is sent on a rampage after robbers accidentally short-circuit the computer. When viewed in conjunction with issue number 5, there is a tangible argument made that technology is dangerous and needs to be used carefully and responsibly. Both of these issues speak to the importance of learning from failure as a society and not getting lost in the clouds, especially when dealing with technology that can be both dangerous and promising such as nuclear energy.



**7. Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. "The Amazing Spider-Man #10." The Enforcers!, vol. 1 no. 10, Marvel Comics, March 1964**

The themes that this issue presents are especially interesting if the Big Man and The Enforcers are believed to be based off of Al Capone, famous for the saying "you can get much further with a kind word and a gun than with a kind word alone." Peter Parker is able to bring down the Big Man by claiming he knows who he is, getting captured, and then defeating the Big Man using his Spider-

Man identity. If the Big Man is a fictional representation of Al Capone, then the fact that he was defeated by a plan centered on the power of gossip is especially intriguing. It raises the question of how virtues and vices come about, and whether it is ethical to exploit them in the name of justice. The duality of failure is presented beautifully as well—the story explores how failure resulting from success can come about just as easily as success resulting from failure.

**8. Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. “The Amazing Spider-Man Annual #1.” The Sinister Six, vol. 1 no. 1, Marvel Comics, October 1964**

Up to this point in the collection, Peter Parker has always had his superpowers to back up his morals and actions. This special, 72-page issue explores the character of Spider-Man as he becomes less super and more human due to powers that seem to be fading. A book of paramount importance to the collection, this comic acts as a powerful rebuttal to the argument that everyday people can't act like superheroes do simply because we don't have their powers. Instead this issue suggests that, like a scrawny Peter Parker, we should choose to make the right choice not because we have the abilities to enforce our morals by brute force, but rather because we truly believe in the good of what we are doing. In a way, this book is a key connection between the fictional world of Spider-Man and the world in which we live.



**9. Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. “The Amazing Spider-Man #18.” The End of Spider-Man!, vol. 1 no. 18, Marvel Comics, November 1964**

This issue adds to the humanity and relatability of Peter Parker and his Spider-Man persona, showing the reader the toll that Peter's secret identity takes on him. With his aunt in need of medicine and the press ridiculing





Spider-Man for running from danger, the audience is forced to reflect—a technique that is criminally underused in the comic book medium. This story is written in such a way that the audience becomes frustrated with Peter's inaction in times of need. However, the conclusion is reached that superheroes don't have to fight for the common good, rather they choose to fight for them. This issue also raises the question of whether we would and/or should do the same thing if given the chance. Such a question is extremely relevant in a society that continues to fail at attempted equality in power. This book attunes the reader to whether or not one should believe it to be a disgraceful failure when an individual comes about power

and fails to enact meaningful change.

#### 10. Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. "The Amazing Spider-Man #20." *The Coming of The Scorpion!*, vol. 1 no. 20, Marvel Comics, January 1965

There is one particular aspect to this story that makes it stand out: the way in which it handles the depiction of a tyrannical press. In this issue the Editor in Chief of The Daily Bugle creates a supervillain, The Scorpion, to take down Spider-Man simply due to the editor's bias against Spider-Man. The story centers on elements of fake and fabricated news as a result of bias and, while dramatized, these elements are extremely relevant today. The fact that this action by someone in the press goes almost unpunished is also notable and causes the audience to reflect on how citizens fail to hold their elites accountable, imposing on their own personal freedoms. The theme of the power of the press is repeated throughout a couple of the issues in this collection, and I feel this book in particular demonstrates that we must be careful in what we accept as fact. Society



as a whole can fail by losing the element of autonomy and ability to think individually.

**11. Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. "The Amazing Spider-Man #33." The Final Chapter!, vol. 1 no. 33, Marvel Comics, February 1966**

Oh, how I adore this book. One of the central pieces in this collection—as its story is heavily focused on failure—the cover depicts a feeling that I believe everyone experiences at least once, hopelessness. Spider-Man is pinned under rubble, water rising, seconds away from quitting and just accepting his defeat. Just as he is about to give up, Spider-Man has a vision in which he sees his deceased uncle—the person he loved the most and failed to protect. Spider-Man learns from his failure and uses both love and hate to find it within himself to succeed. He musters up every last ounce of strength he has and frees himself. It's a beautiful story with breathtaking visuals that I believe everyone should examine and learn from. One panel in particular has the potential to take on an extremely personal meaning:



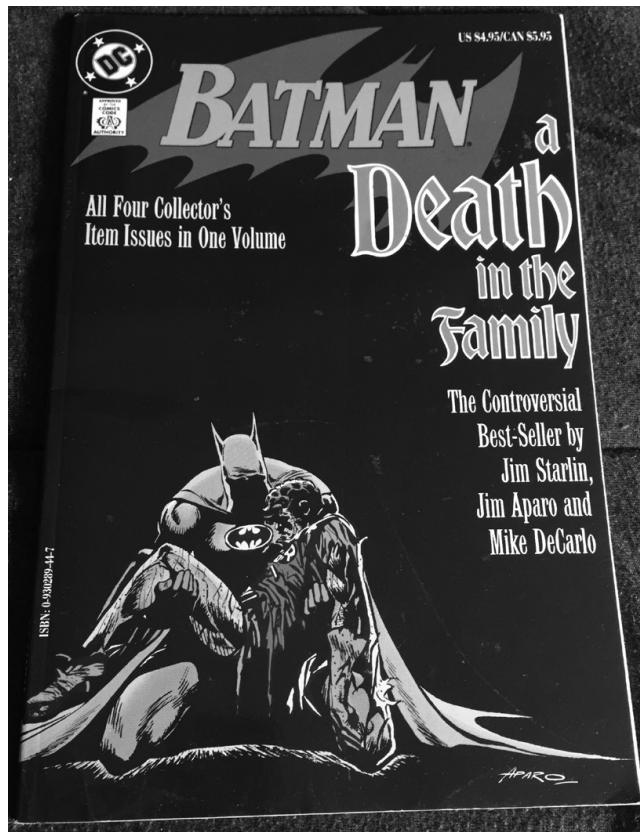
**12. Lee, Stan and Kirby, Jack. "The Fantastic Four #52." The Black Panther!, Vol. 1 no. 52, Marvel Comics, July 1966**

I included this book in the collection for two purposes. The first is that it entices those interested in popular culture to learn more about the history of big-screen adaptations like that of the 2018 film Black Panther starring Chadwick Boseman. Failure is a part of the human experience, and it is important to give people who may be unfamiliar with the comic book medium a segue into this collection. The second reason is because it embodies the adapting culture of the comic book industry in the mid-1960s. There was a conscious choice made in calling this hero the Black Panther,

other names were considered, like the Coal Tiger. Contextualizing this decision in 1966, it is clear that comic books were beginning to experiment with making political statements that were more overt. Just like comic books and their creators, individuals shouldn't be afraid of failure when it comes to sharing their personal opinions. This book encourages people to speak out and speak up in respectful and innovative ways.

### 13. Starlin, Jim and Aparo, Jim. "Batman" a Death in the Family, DC Comics, 1988

One word sums up this story arc: legendary. This book provides an alternate take on success and failure, exploring how inaction may be the best action in response to failure. The Joker tortures and kills Jason Todd (Robin) moments after he is reunited with his long-lost mother and Batman fails to save them. Searching the rubble, Batman finds Todd's mother and holds her as she says "all his problems and [Jason] still turned out good." with her dying breath. Moments later Batman finds Robin's lifeless body buried under rubble. All the pain, all the trauma that Batman—that Bruce Wayne—experiences in a few short moments pushes him to the brink. It reminds his tortured soul of the murder of his own parents and the night he lost everything. Bruce Wayne is broken, Batman is defeated, everything the Caped Crusader stands for he has failed to uphold in the face of hate. After the funerals, Batman comes face to face with the Joker. He has the chance to kill him. He comes to terms with the fact that he is about to commit murder. Yet, at the last second, Batman makes the choice to let the Joker live. The kid in the street who would grow up to fight against evil, the kid that watched his parents—Martha and Thomas Wayne—die, Bruce Wayne makes the choice not to kill. The Dark Knight rises above evil, he makes the choice to save a life rather than end one. Batman's inaction in his crusade to kill the Joker is successful because he does nothing. The Joker does not win in the end because Batman refuses to break—he refuses to kill. Batman is success-



ful because of his failure. I believe every individual can learn something about the personal sacrifices success sometimes requires by examining this story.

## My Wish List

### **Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. “The Amazing Spider-Man #50.” Spider-Man No More!, vol. 1 no. 50, Marvel Comics, July 1967**

With a collection centered on failure, it would be unjust to not have this book. Yet, here I am calling myself a collector. In this issue, Spider-Man quits as a result of his built up frustration in doing the right thing but always being perceived as a villain by the public. Contrasting how most superheroes overcome and succeed as a result of their failure, this comic has become iconic for the way it depicts a contrasting result of failure—hopelessness and defeat. It was published at a peculiar time in American history as well, right between the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the moon landing in 1969. Spider-Man No More! Explores what it means to concede at a time where America was being shaken up domestically and competing against the soviets internationally.

### **Lee, Stan and Ditko, Steve. “The Amazing Spider-Man #121” The Night Gwen Stacy Died, vol. 1 no. 121, Marvel Comics, June 1973**

As some of the most iconic books in the medium, these two comics are unsurprisingly hard to come by and expensive. The Night Gwen Stacy Died story arc was a turning point in comic book history, as an established character was for the first time killed off and continues to this day to remain dead. It was unheard of for any character, let alone the primary love interest of the protagonist, to die and remain that way. The decision to let Gwen Stacy die stands as the prime example of superheroes’ imperfection. Spider-Man very clearly fails to save Gwen and the stakes of the story hold an immense amount of weight. As a result of this failure, Spider-Man has never had another love interest fall victim to a villainous scheme. He has learned from his failure and continues to succeed to this day, an outcome that everyone can learn from and be inspired by.

### **Miller, Frank. “Batman: The Dark Knight Returns” The Dark Knight Returns, vol. 1 no. 1-4, DC Comics, February-June 1986**

This story is one that features a fantastic message about perseverance and will power, two traits that are very important in learning from failure. Bruce Wayne comes out of retirement, literally fighting off aches and pains due to old age and his past encounters with supervillains. This isn’t just a story about succeeding, it’s a story about redemption. Batman comes back to fight crime after failing to defuse a bomb ten years prior—the bomb that killed Jason Todd. It takes time, but he takes down some of the largest crime organizations in Gotham, redeeming himself and honoring the deceased Jason Todd (Robin) in

the process. This is a beautiful story that demonstrates how an individual can use success and failure in selfless ways to improve society and must persevere in order to do so.

**Straczynski, J. Michael and Romita Jr. , John. “Amazing Spider-Man #36”  
Stand Tall, vol. 2 no. 36, Marvel Comics, December 2001**

Beautiful, dark, intense. This issue deals with the tragedy of 9/11 in ways that have the reader choked up from the beginning to the end. The cover is absolutely perfect for such a story—the deepest of black with a minimal amount of identifiers. Dealing with failure on a global scale, this issue demonstrates how delicate human life is and how people band together to overcome failure as a society. It illustrates how much we need each other—at the end of the day every person deserves to be safe. I particularly love how broad and local this story is at the same time: focusing on civilian points of view and the losses they experience as a result of this tragedy, as well as the feeling of societal defeat. Society must learn from this very real failure in order to be successful at coexisting as a global community. When the correct lessons are learned, failure can be a beautiful and unifying force.

**Taylor, Tom and Raapack, Jheremy. “Injustice: Gods Among Us #2” In-  
justice: Gods Among Us 2013, vol. 1 no. 2, DC Comics, February 27, 2013**

Superman fails. The Big Blue Boy Scout runs his bare hand through the Joker’s chest after being tricked into killing his pregnant wife, Lois Lane. This issue shows the result of failure can be failure if one does not learn the correct lesson. This story would serve as a cautionary tale in this collection for those who think they are infallible—or, like the title suggests, Gods among men.



### **About the author**

Nicholas (“Cole”) Duke-Bruechert has been an avid comic book collector since he was 12 years old and hopes to one day found a library devoted to comic books and graphic novels.

### **Notes**

1. Donner, Richard, director. Superman. Blackhawk Films, 1978.
2. Spielberg, Steven, director. Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark. Paramount, 1981.



## THE NIGHT THAT BULWER-LYTTONED ME

Derek S. Wilson

I was Paul Clifford having a Bulwer-Lytton moment when I arrived at my cabin in Packwood, Washington one dark and stormy night. A furious freezing east wind blew that night in November. When I pulled into the drive, dimly I saw a jackstraw of trees in the forest, felled by the storm. One bulky tree lay on my cabin roof.

A neighbor who lives full-time in the area and watches out for our cabins, summoned me on the phone. "There's a tree on your roof. Doesn't look like too much damage, but you'd better come look yourself," she said, trying to offer me a glimmer of hope.

As I approached the front door, I could see the tree had thankfully not simply crushed the place. The tree's trunk broke at a change in the roof pitch. Hope glimmered the damage would not be severe. Once inside, I noticed all the pictures crooked on the wall, and the pendulum of the clock come undone and laying uselessly in the bottom of the case. "Must have been a mighty thump," I thought. Other than these observations, I saw no other damage. But inspecting upstairs closer to the roof I knew would reveal the full extent. Hope dimmed when I noticed a piney scent. Not being Christmas when we bring an eleven foot tree into the cabin, that scent could only mean trouble upstairs.

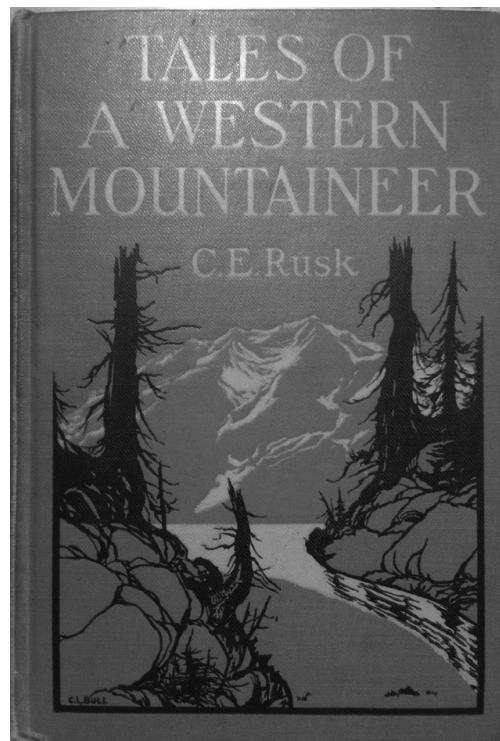
I walked the narrow stairs to the loft where I keep my mountain book library. On fine oak shelves I rescued from my parents' home, it's a tiny library of about 300 volumes focused on local mountain subjects. Here was no apparent damage, so I continued to the large room where my two children, Isabel and Eleanor, sleep. When I switched on the light, there penetrating the roof a large branch protruded that would nearly have impaled Isabel's heart had she been lying on her bed when the tree came down. A section of the pony wall marking the change in roof pitch had collapsed a few inches, having withstood the force to break the trunk of the tree. Fortunately, the storm came with no rain, so water had not penetrated.

Having assessed the damage inside, I picked up a flashlight and walked out the back door to see what cause for hope or despair might lie there. All the while I considered if I could stay in the cabin that night, thinking probably very foolishly that I could do something to mitigate damage. The tempest tossed the trees to their heights and they creaked under the strain. No damage appeared done to the back deck or the hot tub there. Beyond in the forest toward other cabins, I saw trees downed and stacked on each other forming

a nearly solid wall of wood. A tree still standing near the hot tub groaned its displeasure. We always enjoyed looking up into this tree while we drowsed in the hot tub. I shone my flashlight at the base of the trunk. Its frozen root ball rolled chillingly in the ground with every gust, a gap with the earth forming and closing in rhythm. "This tree's coming down any minute," I realized. With little experience predicting the direction a tree might fall under such conditions, staying in the cabin that night with the risk I might be impaled by a branch as might have happened to my daughter, was surely out of the question. I prepared to flee in haste.

If tonight my cabin would be destroyed, I considered, what could I rescue that I most value and I could carry under my arms? Only my favorite books from my mountain library arose as a reasonable answer. So before the next tree fell and obliterated my cabin, I rescued these books.

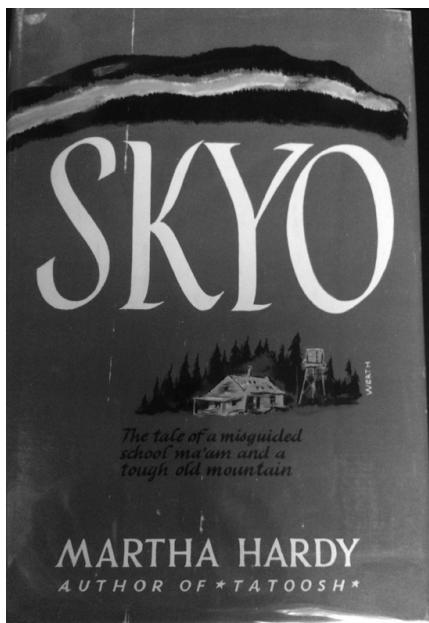
I fetched a hiking backpack from the attic and rushed to the library in the loft. Studying the shelves, I impulsively gripped first *Tales of a Western Mountaineer*, by C.E. Rusk, 1924. My impulse to reach for this book arises from its place as the favorite in my collection. C.E. Rusk's ashes lie at The Castle, a rocky promontory a short distance below the summit of Mount Adams. That site for his final resting place commemorates the important role he played in the early history of Mount Adams. The tales consist of stories from his childhood at the turn of the last century in the vicinity of Mount Adams, and the mountaineering adventures he undertook in the South Cascades as an adult. Rusk and his family named many geographic features of Mount Adams. Having done enough mountaineering to eventually injure myself and rescue others, I'm convinced Rusk displays the correct regard for the vicissitudes of Man and Nature. Rusk exhibits not a shred of modern mountaineers' arrogance. Wonder at Nature's work imbues all his tales. Rusk expresses the joy he and his mountaineering companions felt at receiving real Swiss ice axes to replace their traditional alpenstocks. He recounts another tale when one member in a party climbing on Mount Adams broke her ankle, and to get her down, one of the members lay flat on the snow and glissaded as a human toboggan with her on top. It's tales of mountaineering from a very innocent time.



Tales of a Western Mountaineer,  
by C.E. Rusk, 1924

Next I grabbed *Skyo*, by Martha Hardy. Packwood lies on the literary map largely because of author and schoolmarm Martha Hardy and her first book *Tatoosh*. *Skyo* is her second book. In *Tatoosh*, she recounts her experiences as one of few female fire lookouts during World War II when the men had gone to the war. Tatoosh Mountain near Packwood was her station. Her book made the New York Times bestseller list in 1949. I have a signed first edition of *Tatoosh*, but I did not rescue it. Instead I rescued her second lesser known book *Skyo* because she writes better in that book and the story reveals everyday life in the mountain village Packwood. Incidentally, Martha Hardy was also

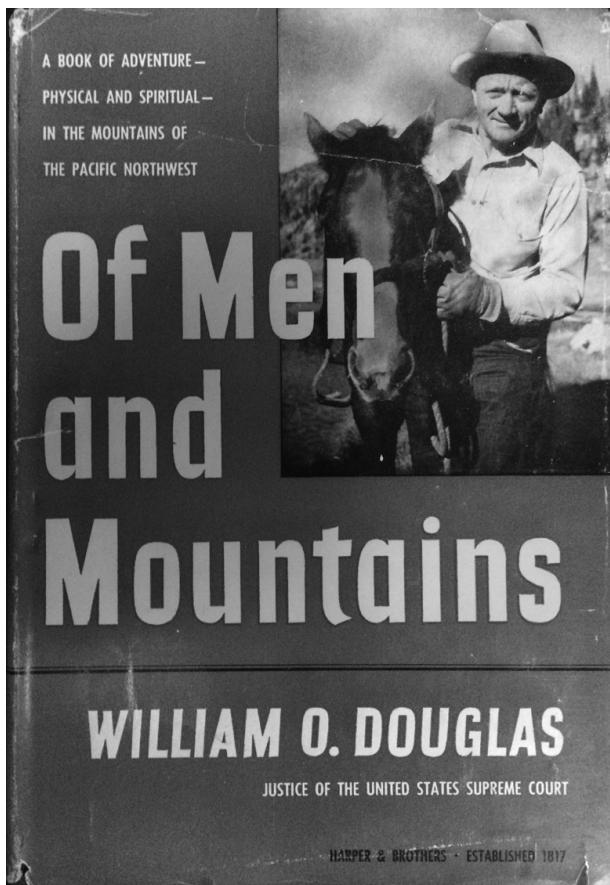
a teacher at Bellevue High School when I attended. Hence she calls herself a schoolmarm. I remember her Pontiac station wagon where she kept her two dogs while she was teaching. At noon she took them for a walk around the playground. By the time she wrote *Skyo*, she had a cabin in Packwood, but still lived and worked in Seattle and Bellevue, similar to my situation. I placed *Skyo* carefully in the backpack.



*Skyo*, by Martha Hardy, 1949

compassed today in the William O. Douglas wilderness near Packwood. The book recounts tales from his youth and his reflections on their greater meaning. An inside dust jacket photograph shows a youthful Douglas holding "... a whole mess of trout" on a stringer, caught in the mountain lakes. He breathlessly describes his ascent of stunning Kloochman Rock on Rimrock Lake by the standard third class route. Douglas became a lifelong mountain enthusiast and spread his exploration to many other ranges. He wrote books about those also. But *Of Men and Mountains* ties Douglas to Northwest mountaineering and the wilderness named for him, so I took it into my armful of books.

Next I saw *How to Ski*, by Vivian Caulfield. The cover holds all the charm. A skier on old long boards holding only one pole appears in white on a dark green background. The cover caught my eye the moment I saw it many years ago in the window of Beatty Books, a long demised bookstore on Seattle's Olive Way. Beneath the charming cover are photographs of the author skiing, single pole in one hand, tobacco pipe in the other. He's English, and admits English limitations with skiing in his time. He chides English "ski runners"



Of Men and Mountains, by William O. Douglas, 1951

him well. We looked at each other, and could only laugh at our circumstances.

My cabin was never demolished, and repairs included improvements and correction of insidious damage caused by carpenter ants. I returned my favorite books to their home in my mountain library, slipping them carefully into their usual location on the oak bookshelves I love. None were obliterated after all, although this occasion was surely a close call. I reflect on the books I chose in a desperate moment and what they might mean. I came to no conclusion; it's the love of books that endures.



### About the Author

Derek Wilson lives alternately in Seattle and Packwood, has two daughters, Eleanor and Isabel, and a beloved wife Catherine. He began book collecting while pursuing an English degree. He also holds an Engineering degree. He loves late 19th century literature, ghost stories, and mountaineering books. He engineers rockets now and also writes for online magazine LewisTalk. Derek is a member of The Book Club of Washington.

for fearing to jump, and shows off himself in several jumping photographs. With such cover art, of course I rescued this book, and into my backpack it fell.

After this last book, a thump on the roof above me, probably from a newly dislodged branch, awoke me from my reverie and reminded me of my dangerous situation. I zipped closed my backpack, galloped down the stairs, and dashed out the front door stopping only to lock it. Solemnly, I drove to the house of the neighbor who had kindly called about the emergency. She hadn't abundant trees near her home, so she was out of danger. She welcomed me in and served me a glass of wine. Her other guest, owner of the cabin nearest mine, also damaged, had sought refuge here as well. I know



## THE FINE ART OF UNCOLLECTING FOR DINOSAURS

*Ellen Wertheimer*

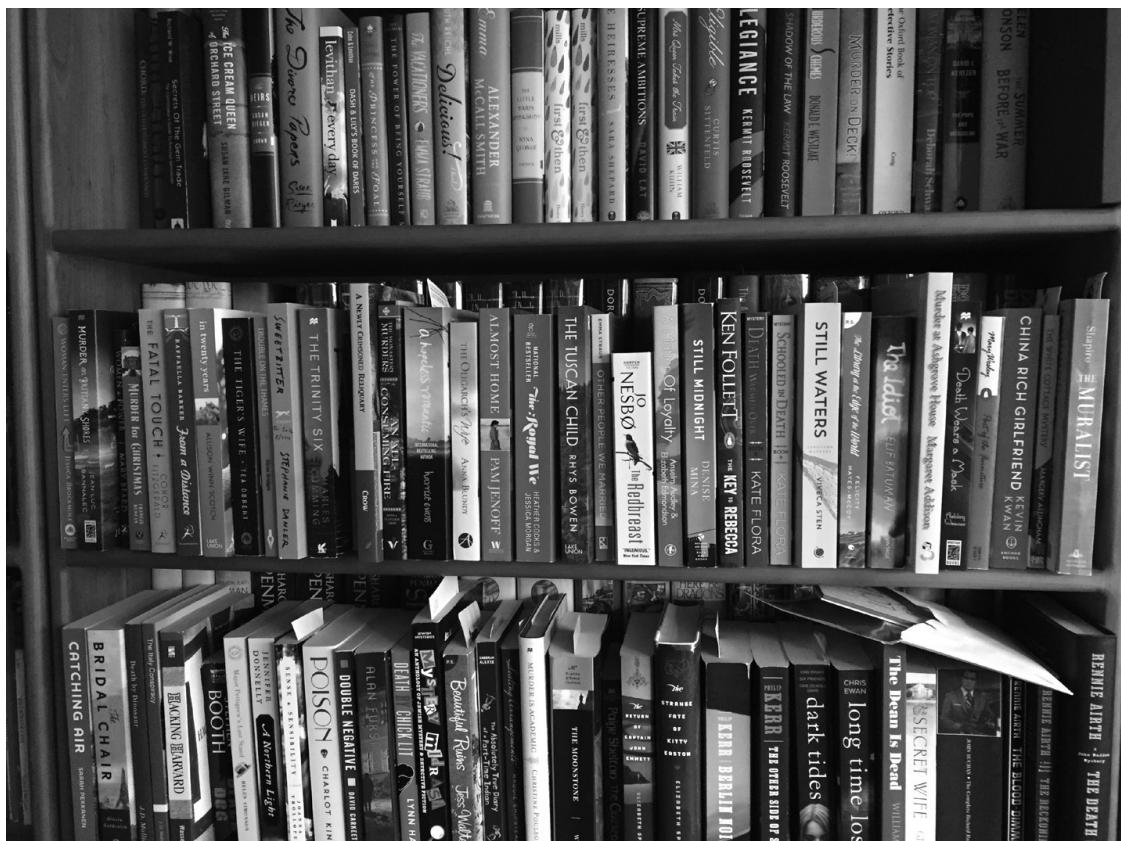
Where to begin? I suppose I should start with the problem I had to solve. I am a baby-boomer confronting both old age and the need to downsize. As numerous recent articles in the *New York Times* and elsewhere have pointed out, the reality is that no one wants your stuff. And that includes my beloved books.

I have always loved books, both reading them and having them. As a girl, I read voraciously. If I liked a book, I needed to own a copy of it. If I liked an author, I needed to have a copy of every book that author had written, whether the author was Rex Stout or Alexandre Dumas. I spent every cent I earned through junior high and high school on books. Growing up in New York City, I regularly went to the Strand bookstore to buy used and review copies, and to Barnes and Noble and Brentano's for new books. When my parents gave me an allowance with the thought that I would spend it on clothes, I spent it all on books instead until my mother changed the arrangement because she was tired of seeing me dressed "in rags."

As you can imagine, after a lifetime like this the books have piled up. But I treasured them all. I bought whole sets of Thackeray on the (false) assumption that I would one day read all of them. Ditto for Twain and Galsworthy, George Eliot and all three Bronte sisters (although in my defense I did read the entire Eliot and Bronte collections). I bought history and mystery, fiction and Judaica, Greek philosophers and Renaissance poets, Russian novels (a product of a tedious adolescent phase) and German romances (ditto, albeit a different phase). When I became interested in Oriental rugs, I bought books about them. That led to books on the history of the Middle East. And so on. You get the picture. Every place I have ever lived for any length of time ended up a library in (a not very effective) disguise, with walls in almost every room lined with bookshelves. My parents, both of whom died young, never had the wish nor the need to downsize, so their books joined my shelves too, including their complete collections of labor biographies and mid-twentieth-century socialist literature (unread, at least by me).

So now I have a problem. I have reached senior citizen status, and now want and need to downsize. What to do?

My first thought was to sell all the books I simply could not imagine myself reading, either again or for the first time. This proved to be much easier said



*A sampling of books on their shelves, as the owner contemplates their future homes.*

than done, even putting aside the physical and mental labor involved in figuring out what to keep (in itself a huge challenge that cannot be minimized). I started going through the thousands of books I needed to sort, and soon found that selling most of them would be impractical. Book dealers didn't want them, which I discovered after pulling out the ones I thought might have some value and trucking them to various dealers. I was right about 20% of the time, having been lucky enough to find dealers who were willing to pay a couple of dollars for books they could sell for five. But what about the remaining 80%?

I needed to face it: the vast majority of my books were not worth the effort of selling them. They might have been at some point in the past, but not now. The world has moved on, and away from the physical page, to say nothing of certain authors who have dated badly (for example a first edition of a John Gunther book, important in its day, but as one dealer told me, “no one reads Gunther any more”). My daughter loves to read but often not in print—for her generation, living in smaller spaces, the digital word will do just fine. I persuaded my local library to take some of the books, but at some point even their generosity and space ran out, and they stopped taking donations. I gave some to a lovely person who owns and runs a book barn. Her place is way out in the country and I doubt she gets more than a few customers a week. I don’t expect any of them will want my books, but at least there is a possibility that

someone might. In any event someone else, some day, will have to go through what's left when the book barn is no more. But no one at all is interested in complete sets of Thackeray, printed in tiny type in double columns in huge cheap volumes; they had no value. Pulp. Only a couple of years of *Encyclopedias Britannica* have any value; it almost goes without saying that the set I had was not one of them. Pulp.

The task was so depressing that I started to think about what the real problem might be. I cannot imagine ever going back to studying Ancient Greek or Old English, or trying to read the complete novels of Sir Walter Scott. So why should it upset me so badly to give up the books that might in theory allow this to happen? I have decided that the real problem is not the down-sizing itself, although it can be a depressing sign of getting old and facing new limits on the future. (No, I will not be relearning Old Icelandic any time soon.) It was a terrible moment for me to pack up a carton of my Ancient Greek texts (yes, I took Ancient Greek in high school) and my Old English volumes (ditto, and the books may have actual value because anyone who wants to read *Beowulf* in the original is not going to do it on Kindle) to store in my attic. I still have them, but will I ever see them again? Will anyone? I doubt it. But why was it so terrible?



*A small portion of a lifetime of books, being put through the process of sorting in order to determine their fates.*

biographies of him. Beowulf? I have the original, two translations, and four books analyzing the poem. But these books have outlived their roles in my life or anyone else's for that matter. Wikipedia has all the answers now, and no one needs or wants my books. To be melodramatic, my books have been rejected, and I can't help asking if the world has gone so far beyond my comprehension that I have become as unnecessary as they are.

I could only conclude that it was because the books were me. They were a part of my identity, my youthful energy, my eagerness to learn, to try new things and new subjects. The idea that someone might mention wanting to learn about Richard III and the princes in the Tower, and I could walk over to my shelf and pull out five books on the subject, was an important part of my self-image. The real story of Macbeth? I have three

Something similar may be at work with the books I have inherited from my parents and grandparents. Their books were important parts of their lives—some were among the very few possessions my grandparents brought with them as refugees from Nazi Germany. If those books were so important to them then, how can they have such little value now? And how can I throw them away? These are among the books I feel compelled to keep, even though no one can or will take the time to decipher their fading German print. For me, these books represent my adored father, who died before his grandchildren were born. They cannot represent him for anyone else; it's just not possible. This fact, in a way, makes it feel like he is dying all over again. Perhaps that's what I'm afraid of too: being forgotten, like the books with my parents' names written in the front that I must now toss into the recycling bin. These books do not of course represent my parents, and I have a lot by which to remember them, as my children will have by which to remember me, but sometimes it feels as though my memories are being thrown away with the books. (Incidentally, when in the sorting process I find myself deciding to keep a completely unreadable work that no one, including me, will ever look at just because my father wrote his name as owner in the front, I know that it is time to stop sorting for the day. I can begin again tomorrow.)

As I said, it's hard. Each book's departure is an emblem of my own mortality. Not only is my personal world changing, but so is the world about me. No one reads *Beowulf* in the original any more. No one reads Edna St. Vincent Millay (despite the undeniable beauty of her undeniably un-modern poetry). No one reads Galsworthy (probably a good thing, but still . . .). And definitely no one needs or wants that *Compact Oxford English Dictionary* I joined the Book of the Month Club to get, although I might get a little something on eBay if I sold the magnifying glass that came with it. But then, you don't even need a magnifying glass these days because you can just use the zoom function on your smartphone instead.

Sigh. And when I have finished the books, it's on to the photographs. No one (including me) will ever know who the people are in many of the pictures, but they were important to someone who was important to me. How can I throw them away? I suppose because someone has to. But maybe it won't be me. It depends on how far my personal resolve can reach.



### About the author

Having been unable to find a career that would compensate her for reading fiction, Ellen Wertheimer teaches law.



## SELECTED TREASURES OF THE ELISABETH C. MILLER LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON BOTANIC GARDENS

*Brian R. Thompson*

The Elisabeth C. Miller Library at the University of Washington is a rich resource well known by gardeners throughout the Pacific Northwest, but is relatively unfamiliar to historians, artists, and bibliophiles. All these groups could find much of interest in the library's holdings. Opening in 1985, the story of the library and its collections began several decades earlier.

Brian O. Mulligan (1907-1996) was born in Northern Ireland and educated at the Royal Horticultural Society in Wisley, England. Hired by the University of Washington in 1946 to direct its arboretum (now known as the Washington Park Arboretum), he recognized the importance of outreach to the general community beyond the University and that "a good library is an essential part of this service." He had a keen interest in the literature of horticulture and botany, and knew good sources for buying important 17th through 20th century works in the depressed English economy after World War II.

Elisabeth Miller was a major force in the very active Seattle horticultural community of the mid- to late 20th century. When the University established the Center for Urban Horticulture in the early 1980s, she and her husband Pendleton Miller saw the opportunity to create a library, based at the University, but with a broad mission that extended to the avid gardening public, and professionals in the landscape and nursery trades. The collection that Mulligan began became the core of this new library.

The library has grown to 16,000 published books with a collection of 500 periodicals; 240 of these are active. It is now the library for the union of the Center for Urban Horticulture and the Washington Park Arboretum, known collectively as the University of Washington Botanic Gardens. The rare book collection, some 800 books, is housed in a climate controlled, secured room. The Book Club of Washington toured highlights from the collection in May 2019. This article discusses some of the earlier books viewed in that tour.

### **Early herbals and John Gerard**

The early and rare works in the Miller Library collection tell a detailed story of botany and the agricultural, medicinal, and ornamental uses of plants, especially as told by British, Irish, and North American writers and illustrators, reflecting Mulligan's collecting interests and sources. The earliest books were known collectively as herbals with plants drawn and described to identify

them and their uses for apothecaries and physicians. In European culture, herbals have dated back to the time of Alexander the Great, but most have not survived. The five volumes of *De Materia Medica*, written from 50-70 CE by Dioscorides is the oldest surviving intact.

By the 1500s, there was a greater emphasis on botany, the study of plants as part of the natural world. The most famous herbal of that century is by Leonhart Fuchs (1501-1566), a German physician and botanist after whom the popular garden plant *Fuchsia* is named. Sadly, the Miller Library does not have an original Fuchs herbal, but we have two excellent facsimile publications complete with considerable commentaries. From a visual aspect, my favorite is *The New Herbal of 1543* published by Taschen in 2016. Taken from Fuchs's personal copy of the herbal, it is illustrated with over 500 woodcut illustrations that were hand colored. The quality of the images was of the highest importance to Fuchs. He hired three well-known artists: one who drew from nature, a second who transferred the drawings to wood blocks, a third to carve the wood blocks. Their work was so highly regarded that they are included in a group portrait at the end of the book. Taschen had a similar high standard of quality in its reproduction.

John Gerard (1545-1612) was an English apothecary, and an observant botanist and plant collector with a special interest in the native plants of England. His most famous book, *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes*, typically just known as *Gerard's Herbal*, was first published in 1597. There is scholarly debate over his sources, and how much credit for the content belongs to his publisher/printer and others, but most agree that this near contemporary of Shakespeare was a gifted writer of English, at a time when most scientific books were written in Latin.

The Miller Library has the third edition (1636) of Gerard's Herbal, greatly enlarged by another English apothecary, Thomas Johnson (c. 1600-

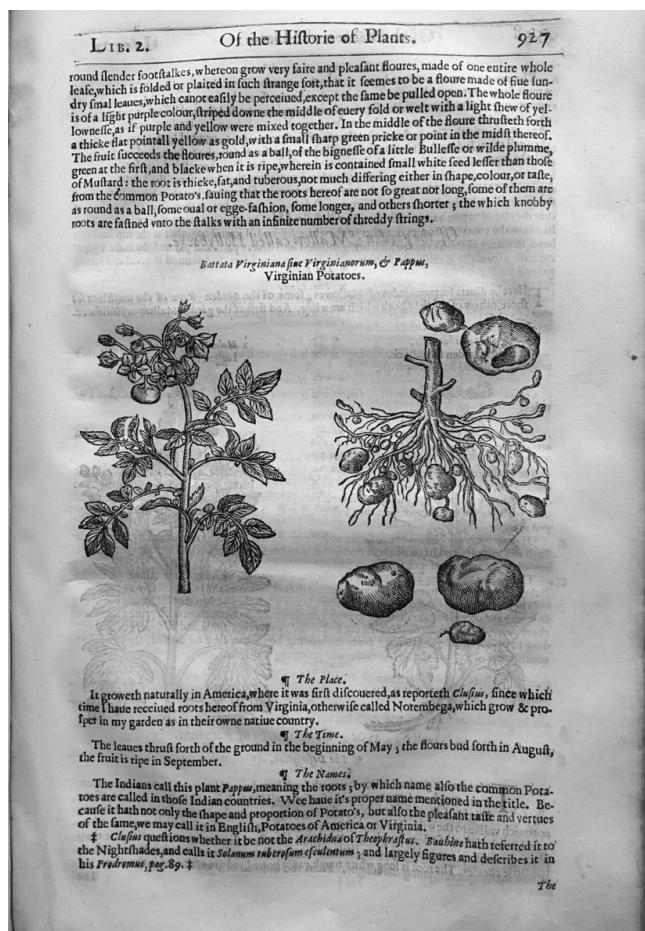


Image of potatoes from Gerard's Herbal, 1636.

1644). Johnson belittled Gerard, stating in his introductory note to the reader, “in short, he did his best: he simply was not properly qualified to do the job.” Reviewers at the time and today agree that Johnson’s two editions (1633 and 1636) were a significant improvement in accuracy and in the quality of the woodcut illustrations.

*Gerard’s Herbal* was very popular. It was a fundamental botany text for 200 years as it described the habitats and flowers of many English native plants. It was important for providing information about plants used for food, dyeing, and home remedies. Several plants from the New World were introduced, including potatoes. New plants from elsewhere became backbones of English horticulture, such as clematis and honeysuckle.

The two images of the potato are good examples of the illustrations. On the left is the plant above ground, including the flowers and the fruit, which resemble the potato’s close plant relative, the tomato. On the right is the below ground root system, showing the tubers, recognizable by any vegetable gardener. The title claims these are from Virginia, which was an error of the times—the potato is native to Central and South America.



Title page from the third edition (1636) of Gerard’s Herbal, greatly enlarged by another English apothecary, Thomas Johnson (c. 1600-1644).

The title page of the 1636 edition is particularly rich in imagery. Using a finer technique of wood engraving, as compared to the simpler woodcuts found in the rest of the book, this page shows Gerard at the bottom center, flanked on both sides by opulent vases of flowers. The vase on the left is topped by a bunch of bananas, honoring this newly discovered addition to the European palate that Johnson added to this edition. At the top are Ceres and Pomona, goddesses associated with grains and fruits. In the middle are Theophrastus and Dioscorides, two early Greek botanists.

The 1630s were the time of the “tulipmania” financial crisis in nearby Holland. This infatuation with these bulbs, primarily from

central Asia, impacted the English, too. Gerard and Johnson were well aware of this interest and included many pages and illustrations of tulips, including this introduction:

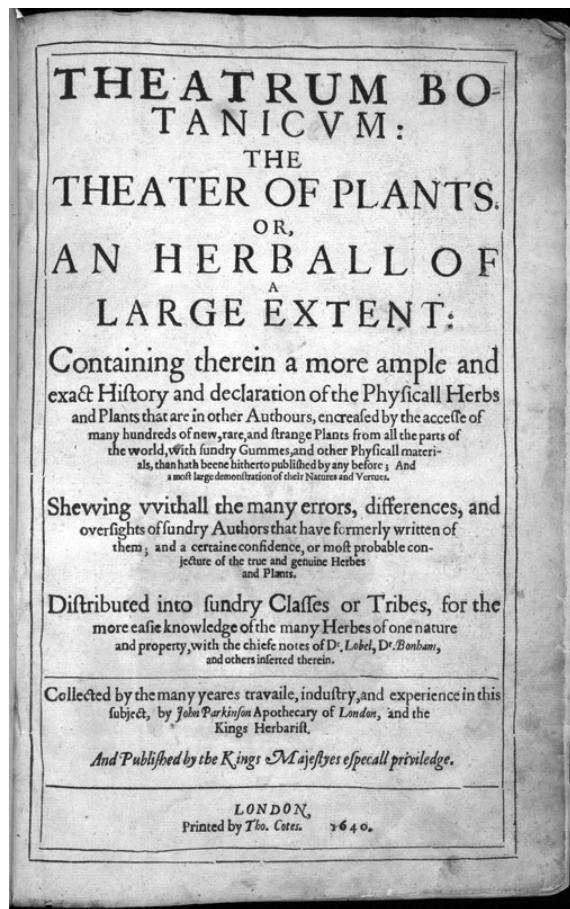
“Tulipa, or the Dalmation Cap is a strange and forrein floure, one of the number of the bulbed floures, whereof there be sundry sorts, some greater, some lesser, with which all studious and painefull Herbarists desire to be better acquainted, because of that excellent diversitie of most brave flores which it beareth.”

## John Parkinson

John Parkinson (1567-1650) was an apothecary well known to James I (the English king from 1603-1625) and later the royal botanist to Charles I (reigned 1625-1649). Through a combination of practical skills, a knack for networking, and some luck, he rose from a modest agricultural background in Lancashire in northwest England (the red rose of the War of the Roses in the 15th century) to become an important member of the royal court. He also had a good political sense, as he maintained his Catholic faith, mostly in secret, while serving in an increasingly Anglican and Puritan country that led to the English civil war (1642-1651) and the execution of Charles I. The same war killed Thomas Johnson, but Parkinson survived to die in his bed at age 83.

Parkinson published two books and both are in the Miller Library. *Paradisi in Sole: Paradisus Terrestris* (1629) is our oldest book, while *Theatrum Botanicum* (1640) is our third oldest (after the third edition of Gerard's *Herbal* in 1636). Both books were published in a single edition. Unlike Gerard's writing, Parkinson authorship is now undisputed despite a challenge to it after his death. The illustrations for *Paradisus* are by Albert Switzer, a German employed by Parkinson, who mostly copied from existing European floras but added some original work drawn from living plants.

*Theatrum Botanicum* (“The The-



Title page from *Theatrum Botanicum* (1640), by John Parkinson.

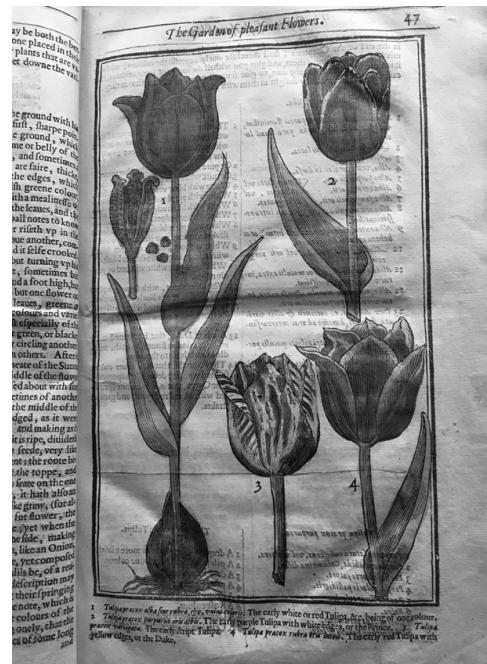
ater of Plants") was a successor to *Gerard's Herbal*, being of similar scope and purpose. Opinions on the relative merits of both vary, but for sure numbers Parkinson's work is more comprehensive. The 1597 edition by Gerard has less than 2,000 plants, while the 1636 revision has 2,850. Parkinson describes 3,800 in his 1640 book. Julie Bruton-Seal and Matthew Seal consider *Gerard's Herbal* to "have enduring charm and charisma" but as a useful herbal "inferior to Parkinson in accuracy, comprehensiveness and above all in detail of plants' names and medicinal values."

Parkinson would probably be annoyed if he knew that his reputation today is primarily for the earlier *Paradisus*, a book he wrote quickly, rather than the later *Theatrum Botanicum*, which was the accumulation of decades of research. However, this comprehensive herbal was one of the last of its kind, whereas *Paradisus* was the first book in a long English tradition of writings about ornamental gardening. He held the beauty of plants in high regard and his two-acre garden because a tourist attraction that he maintained for over 30 years. Anna Parkinson, possibly a descendent, writes: "The most startling feature of the *Paradisus* was that it was the first English book about plants to be devoted above all to their beauty, making this the key purpose of a garden."

Parkinson was also fascinated by hybridizing plants, especially tulips, developing 125 new varieties. He introduces his chapter on "The Turkes Cap" with:

*Next unto the Lillies, and before the Narcissi or Daffodils, the discourse of Tulipas deserveth his place, for that it partaketh of both their natures; agreeing with the Lillies in leaves, flowers, and seede, and somewhat with the Daffodils in rootes. There are not onely divers kindes of Tulipas, but sundry diversities of colours in them, found out in these later dayes by many the searchers of natures varieties, which have not formerly been observed: our age being more delighted in the search, curiosity, and rarities of these pleasant delights, then any age I thinke before.*

The title page for *Paradisus* deserves some study. Parkinson was a stickler in both his books for scientific accuracy, but he allowed illustrator Switzer a free hand in this fanciful depiction of the Garden of Eden. Diminutive garden flowers tower over Adam and Eve. Exotic trees of various sorts, many too tropical for the English climate, form a forest in the background. The title provides another curiosity. *Paradiſi in Sole: Paradisus Terrestris* translates



Tulips from *Theatrum Botanicum* (1640), by John Parkinson.

to Park-in-Sun's Terrestrial Paradise, a pun on the author's name.

Behind Adam is strange shrub with a stalk holding up a lamb, possibly an early English theory on the source of cotton. It was known to come from a plant in the tropics. However most clothing at that time came from the wool of sheep. How to solve this incongruity in the English mind of early 17th century? A plant that produces sheep as its fruit.

## Philip Miller

Among his other accomplishments, John Parkinson was a co-founder of the Society of Apothecaries in London. In the later 17th century, the society established a garden in Chelsea, outside the city at that time. It languished through several curators until Philip Miller

(1691-1771) took the position in 1722, a post he held for 48 years. During his tenure, Miller developed the Chelsea Physic Garden into one of the most highly regarded botanic gardens in Europe. Today, it is still a must-see for any gardener visiting London.

Much of that reputation was built on Miller's publications, the most important being the *Gardener's Dictionary*, first published in 1731. Based on practices established at the Physic Garden, it became an authoritative text in both Britain and America for the next one hundred years. Miller published eight editions during his lifetime, with a ninth edition updated in 1807 by Thomas Martyn (1735-1825), a professor of botany at Cambridge and a close friend and colleague of Miller's son Charles (also a botanist at Cambridge).

The Miller Library has copies of both the 1731 first edition, and the 1807 ninth edition, the latter under the revised title *The Gardener's and Botanist's Dictionary*, reflecting the added emphasis on the science of botany by Martyn.



Title page from the *Paradisi in Sole: Paradisus Terrestris*, by John Parkinson, 1629.

The contrast in the sizes of these two editions is striking. The one volume 1731 edition is roughly 14x9x3" in size. Each of the two volumes of the 1807 edition is 18x12x5". There is no pagination, but this difference in physical size clearly reflects the tremendous increase in horticultural and botanical knowledge in England during the 18th century. Miller estimated near the end of his life that the number of cultivated plants in England had doubled from since his earliest studies; he introduced some 200 of those plants himself from America.

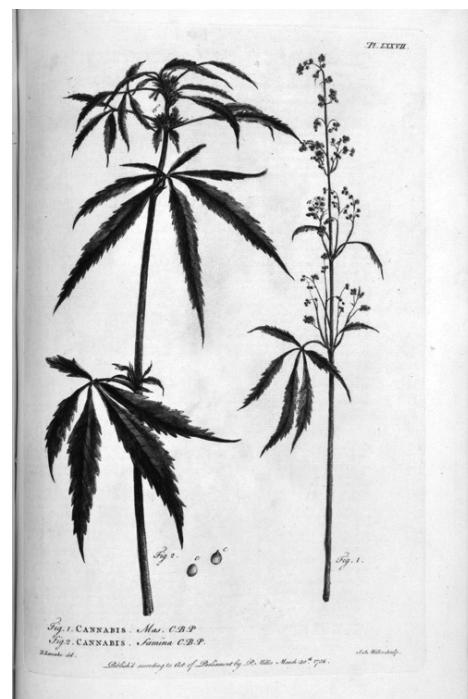
This increase in size can also be attributed to greater depth of individual entries. In the first edition, Miller writes about cannabis:

*This Plant is propagated in the rich Fenny Parts of Lincolnshire, in great Quantities, for its Bark, which is so useful for cordage, cloth, etc. and the seeds afford an oil which is used in medicine. The manner of propagating it is so well known, that it would be needless to insert it in this place.*

In the ninth edition, the entry on cannabis has expanded to over two full pages. Interestingly, nothing further is mentioned about the medicinal value, but instead the focus is on the growing and harvesting of cannabis for hemp fiber. This is similar to the pragmatic approach of all the entries in these books; the goal is to improve and introduce new methods for the cultivation of kitchen gardens, orchards, and flower gardens. Miller also addresses the growing class of professional plant growers with best practices for large-scale production of plants for sale.

Comparing the different editions also provides a good lesson in botanical nomenclature. In the early 18th century, plants were described with long polynomials, typically in Latin, using as many words as deemed necessary for a full description. While this gave the reader a clear depiction, these names were unwieldy and did little to show botanical relationships. The Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) developed the binominal nomenclature system for both plants and animals that we use today. Miller was a slow adapter of this system, even though Linnaeus visited the Chelsea Physic Garden, but he switched to the Linnaean system by the last edition (1768) of the *Dictionary* produced during his lifetime.

*The Gardener's Dictionary* was very popular and well used, but contained few



Cannabis, from the 9th edition of  
The Gardener's and Botanist's  
Dictionary, by Thomas Martin,  
1807.

illustrations. Miller recognized their value, but the cost of adding them was prohibitive. Instead, he published in a series of parts *Figures of the Most Beautiful, Useful, and Uncommon Plants described in the Gardener's Dictionary*. The Miller Library has the 1760 compilation of these parts that includes 300 hand-colored prints from copperplate engravings. The accuracy of these illustrations was very important to Miller; he insisted that each plant be drawn from nature at its peak flowering. Fruits and seeds were added later when ripe. Cannabis is one of the plants he chose to illustrate, but he left out tulips. The popularity of these spring flowering bulbs had waned in the 120 years since tulipmania.

### **Joseph Dalton Hooker**

The Miller Library's collection of 19th century books is extensive. To highlight, I have focused on the life and works of Joseph Dalton Hooker (1817-1911). A close friend of Charles Darwin, Hooker was also one of the many British plant explorers that flourished in the 19th and early 20th centuries. He was the youngest member of a four-year voyage (1839-1843) to the Antarctic Ocean that for the first time mapped much of the Antarctica coastline and recorded the flora of several isolated island groups and the southern tips of South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and South America. The Miller Library has a 1963 reprint of *Flora Antarctica: The Botany of the Antarctic Voyage*, originally published by Hooker in three parts between 1844-1859. Later travels included Morocco (the Miller Library has *Journal of a Tour in Morocco and the Great Atlas*, 1878) and western North America, including Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and California.

Hooker is most remembered today for the three years he spent in and around the kingdom (now Indian state) of Sikkim from 1847-1851. Wedged between Nepal, Bhutan, and the Himalayan range that forms the border with Tibet, this was a crossroads of many cultures. It was also one of the richest places botanically in the world with a wide range of climates, soil types, and elevations in a small area (Sikkim is only slightly bigger than King County). Hooker was a good journalist and a fair artist. He wrote of his travels in *Himalayan Journals* (1854—in the Miller Library collection) complete with own drawings, mostly of the vast scenery and human made structures. He writes in the introduction:

*The landscapes, etc. have been prepared chiefly from my own drawings, and will, I hope, be found to be tolerably faithful representations of the scene. I have always endeavored to overcome that tendency to exaggerate heights, and increase the angle of slopes, which is I believe the besetting sin, not of amateurs only, but of our most accomplished artists. As, however, I did not use instruments in projecting outlines, I do not pretend to have wholly avoided this snare.*

Of course, he was not there primarily as a travel writer and artist. He was

sent by his father, William Jackson Hooker (1785-1865), who was director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew near London (Joseph followed his father as director). While all plants were of interest, he was most keen on rhododendrons. Modern visitors to the gardens of Britain and Ireland know of the rich collections of rhodies throughout these islands, and because of similar climates and garden cultures, the Pacific Northwest gardening community has also been smitten and successful with these wonderful shrubs and small trees. It is hard to realize that in the early 19th century, these plants were little known.

Joseph Hooker's work changed all that. He discovered 21 new species, and introduced to European gardens another dozen. He sent seeds, pressed plant specimens, his extensive and botanically accurate descriptions, and his drawings to his father over the course of his stay in Asia. The seeds were distributed to European gardens, where many of the resulting plants are still growing as mature specimens today. William Hooker was eager to publish an accounting

of these new species on behalf of his son, as this is how botanical discoveries are claimed for science.

While this could have been done in existing journals, William had the desire and means to create something grand. He edited and published under his son's name *The Rhododendrons of Sikkim Himalaya* in three parts from 1849-1851. He used Joseph's descriptions as the text, but it was necessary to have stunning as well as botanical accurate images. For that, he turned to Walter Hood Fitch (1817-1892), one of the preeminent botanical illustrators of the 19th century.

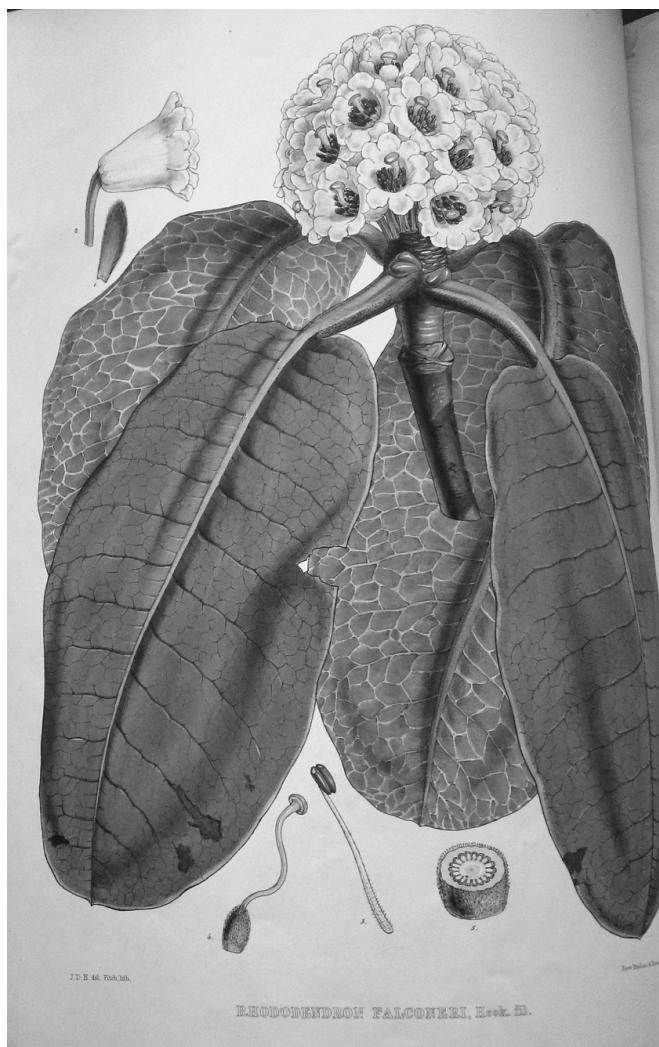


Illustration from *The Rhododendrons of Sikkim Himalaya*, published by William Hooker, (under his son's name, Joseph Hooker), in three parts from 1849-1851

Fitch used the pressed specimens and Joseph's descriptions to create drawings and then lithographs of the new or introduced species, and even did some of the hand coloring himself, a task usually left to lesser artists. Lynn Parker,

writing in the Kew Library Art and Archives blog said that Fitch “possessed great proficiency in working from dried herbarium specimens to create expressive and accurate illustrations, a skill he was justifiably proud of, declaring, ‘sketching living plants is merely a species of copying, but dried specimens test the artist’s abilities to the uttermost’”. The results speak for themselves in one of the most beautiful books in the Miller Library collection.

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### About the author

Brian R. Thompson is the manager and curator of horticultural literature for the Elisabeth C. Miller Library of the University of Washington Botanic Gardens. He became a gardener and a collector of horticultural literature, starting with nursery catalogs, before he was 10. Brian is a member of The Book Club of Washington.



## 'AS FAR AS THEIR BOOKS REACH' EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS WESTERN WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY'S NEW JUDAICA COLLECTION

*David Schlitt*

"The key word of the twenty-first century is 'globalization,'" wrote Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom Jonathan Sacks in 2009. "For most, it is the newest of the new. For Jews it is the oldest of the old. Since the Babylonian exile twenty-six centuries ago, certainly since the Roman era two thousand years ago, Jews lived at great distances from one another, yet they were connected by a thousand gossamer strands of the spirit. They were the world's first and, until recently, its only global people."

The "gossamer strands of the spirit" described by Rabbi Sacks give the impression of something immaterial. Yet the threads linking the Jewish people are not mere metaphor. Neither will one find these connective strands in genes and double helixes. Rather, the threads connecting global Judaism are located in the written word: "Ours is not a bloodline," explain the authors Amos Oz and Fania Oz-Salzberger, "But a text line."

From its origins, writes University of Pennsylvania Professor David Ruderman, "The transmission of Judaism has always been heavily dependent on written texts." However, it is in the early modern period that Rabbi Sacks's connective "strands"—or Oz's "text lines"—become fully, richly visible. While the importance of texts has been a constant across Jewish history, the introduction of the printing press in fifteenth century Europe revolutionized their dissemination and availability. Jewish communities were quick to adopt the new technology. By the time of the Spanish expulsion in 1492, Western European Jewish printers had published over one hundred-and-eighty Hebrew titles. Books printed in Portugal found their way to the Ottoman Empire and Northern Europe. Jews fleeing Iberia set up presses in Constantinople by 1493; Jewish communities in Italy and Central Europe followed suit soon after.

Where Jews have gone, Jewish books have followed. If you want to trace patterns of migration and settlement in the modern period, follow the books. If you want to trace the intellectual and cultural development of the Jewish people, follow the books. To observe continuity and change? Rupture and reconstruction?—follow the books.

It is in recognition of this phenomenon that Western Washington University Libraries has titled its first major exhibition of Judaica, "As Far as Their Books Reach: Jewish Printing and the Global Jewish Diaspora." The exhibi-

tion, which extends from September 23, 2019 until March 20, 2020, takes its name from the 14th century Castilian rabbi Isaac ben Jacob Capantón, who wrote, “A man’s wisdom extends only as far as his books reach.” Spanning five centuries and six continents, the material on exhibition aims to illuminate the physical, intellectual, and cultural journeys of the Jewish people, and build upon the conversation begun in last year’s exhibition, *The Global Book*, by Michael Taylor. See BCW *Journal*, Fall 2018.

In addition, “As Far as Their Books Reach” serves as something of a “launch party” for Western Washington University Libraries’ new collections in Judaica and Holocaust & Genocide Studies. Most of the items on display have arrived at Western Libraries only since 2018, as part of a broader effort to support emerging areas of study and diverse voices on campus.

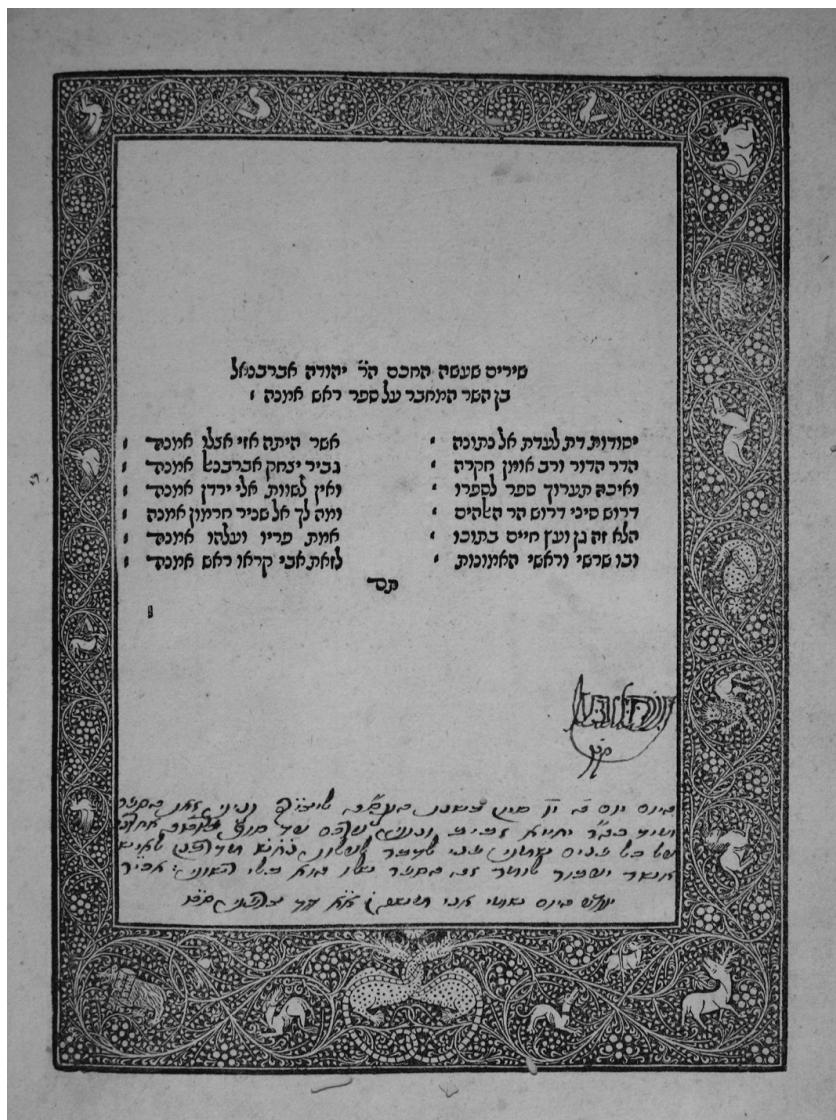
In recent years, Jewish and Holocaust Studies have established themselves as significant teaching and research priorities for Western faculty and students. In 2016, the university established the Ray Wolpow Institute for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Crimes Against Humanity, named after Western Professor Ray Wolpow, faculty emeritus at WWU’s Woodring College of Education and founder of the Northwest Center for Holocaust, Genocide, and Ethnocide Education. The following year, Western Washington University hired historian Sarah Zarrow to serve as the school’s first Endowed Professor in Jewish Studies. Starting this fall, undergraduates will be able to pursue a Minor in Holocaust and Genocide Studies (HGST) at Western, making the school “the first public university in the state with such a minor,” according to Wolpow Institute Director Dr. Sandra Alfors.

In response to this increased interest, during 2018 Director of Heritage Resources Elizabeth Joffrion successfully negotiated the transfer of over 3,000 relevant volumes from the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley to WWU. The transfer included the Edward S. Setchko Holocaust Collection, and over fifty linear feet of rare books in Judaica and Western Americana from the collections of Berkeley’s Judah Magnes Museum.

Heritage Resources’ new collections in Judaica and Holocaust & Genocide Studies also serve as a rebuke to recent incidents of hate speech on Western’s campus. In March 2018 several books in the Jewish Studies section of Western’s Library were damaged and defaced with anti-Semitic language. Following the replacement of the damaged books, the Western community came together “in a public display of solidarity and support” at the Wilson Library on April 10, 2018. As reported in Western Today, “Western Libraries is proud to restore the vandalized content and to continue efforts to acquire new resources supporting Jewish Studies. [...] To that end, and prior to these anti-Semitic incidents, the Libraries [have] been actively acquiring content related to Jew-

ish and Holocaust Studies in order to support both the Ray Wolpow Institute for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Crimes against Humanity, and Jewish Studies coursework at Western.” (Western Today, April 3, 2018)

The proliferation of hate speech, antisemitism and xenophobia during the past years lends regrettable relevance to the Western Washington University Libraries’ Judaica exhibition. The five centuries of diasporic Judaism documented in the exhibit are bookended by two catastrophes: the Spanish Expulsion and the Holocaust. However, in between—and during—these epochal tragedies, the written word offers evidence of resistance and continuity, innovation and exchange.



Verso of *Rosh Amana* by Isaac Abravanel, printed in Constantinople by David and Samuel ibn Nachmias, 1505.

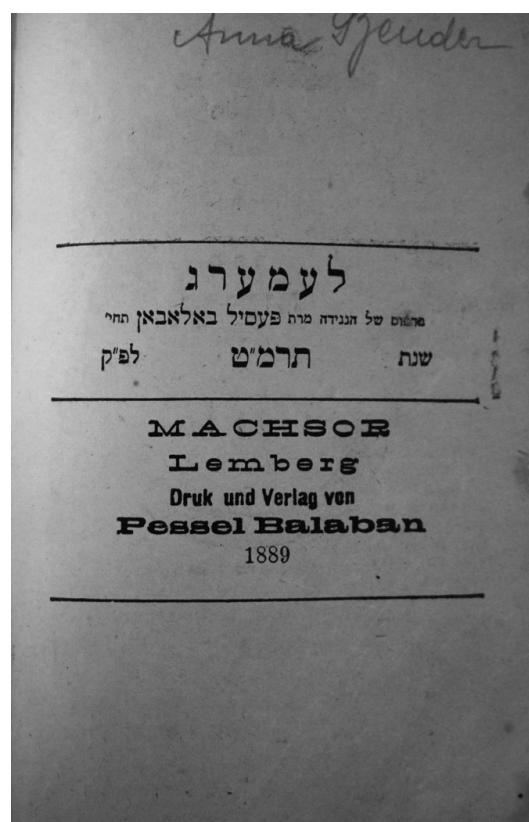
The oldest text in our Judaica collection ranks among the oldest texts on the Western campus. *Rosh Amana* (“Pinnacle of Faith”), by Spanish rabbi Isaac Abravanel, was published in Constantinople in 1505 by the printers David

and Samuel ibn Nachmias. Abravanel was a leader of the Spanish Jewish community during the Inquisition and counted himself among the 300,000 Jews expelled from Iberia between 1492 and 1497 (the figure of 300,000 comes from Rabbi Abravanel's own estimate; the actual number is likely lower). It was in 1496 in Naples that Abravanel completed *Rosh Amana*, a defense of medieval rationalist rabbi Maimonides. In concluding *Rosh Amana*, Abravanel anticipates the work of 18th century enlightenment philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, asserting that "Judaism has no dogmas whatsoever and that all its beliefs are equally valid, fundamental, and precious." (Kellner, 2004)

Like Abravanel, the ibn Nachmias brothers were Jews of Spanish origin, referred to as "Sephardim." Refugees of the Spanish Expulsion, in 1492 they made their way in to the Ottoman Empire, a haven of tolerance relative to the European continent. The ibn Nachmias brothers established their Hebrew printing press in Constantinople in 1493—the first press of any language in the Ottoman Empire—and it operated until 1518. The press published religious texts of exceptional quality, of which *Rosh Amana*, with its verso framed by an intricate woodcut, is a striking example. Responsible for over 100 Hebrew titles by the start of the 16th century, Constantinople played a crucial role in the first generation of printing.

Printing technology and expertise developed in Constantinople found their way to Sephardic Jewish communities elsewhere in the Ottoman Empire such as Salonika (Thessaloniki), whose first printers date to 1513, Safed (1557), and Smyrna/Izmir (1658). It was also in Constantinople that, in the mid-16th century, Doña Reyna Mendes established and operated her own printing press. Mendes was not the first woman involved in the production of Hebrew books, but she was the first to have run a press not inherited from her husband. Doña Reyna Mendes helped establish a tradition of Jewish women in printing that endures into the present, and stands as a central feature of the history of Hebrew printed word.

While Western Libraries is not yet in possession of any of Doña Reyna's work, "As Far as Their Books Reach"



Title page of High Holidays prayer book ("machzor") published by Pessel Balaban, 1889.

features publications from two of the most prolific women printers of the 19th and 20th century, Pessel Balaban and Deborah Romm. Women's involvement in the business and craft of printing persisted through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but Jewish printing's gradual eastward migration during the 19th century led to increasing visibility for women printers. Removed from the culture of Western European bourgeois respectability, Eastern Europe offered Jewish women considerable economic and social opportunities (and responsibilities). Of the twenty-four women known to have been active in Hebrew printing in the 19th century, according to Jennifer Breger, seventeen were in Eastern Europe.



*Portrait of Deborah (Dvoyre) Romm, Vilna, ca. 1900. (Courtesy YIVO Digital Archive on Jewish Life in Poland)*

In Lemberg, the Lviv of modern-day Ukraine, Pessel Balaban ranked among the most famous printers of the second half of the nineteenth century. After the death of her husband, Balaban expanded the press through the production of high-quality essentials for the Jewish home library, such as the code of Jewish law known as the *Shulhan Arukh*.

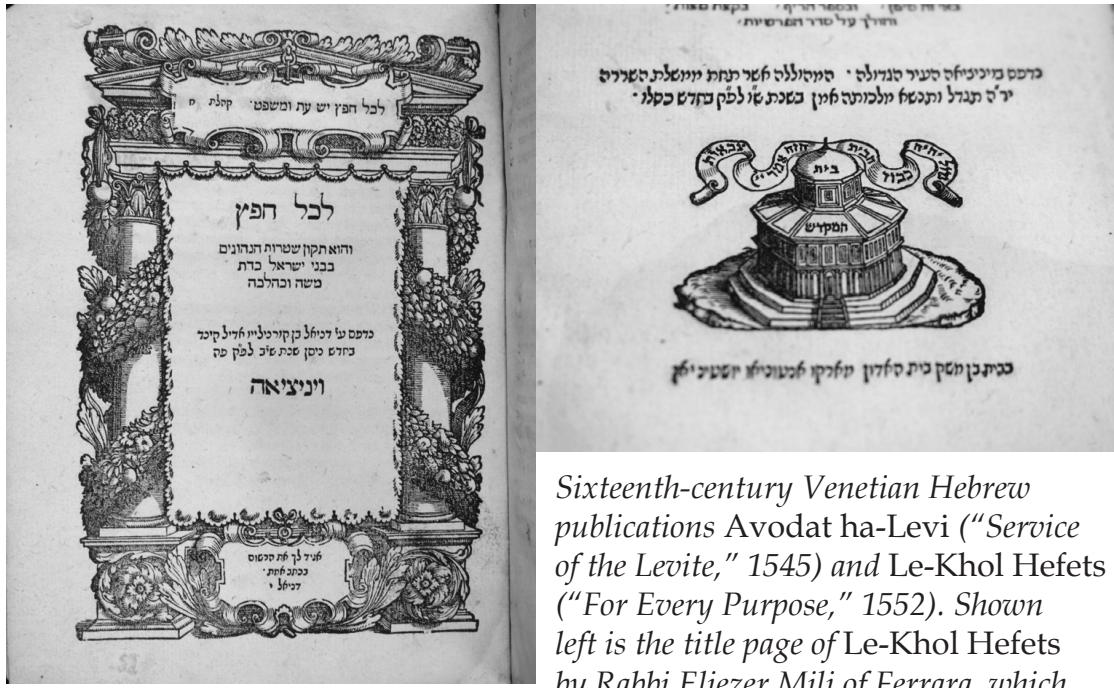
The Romm printing house, which operated in Vilna (Vilnius, Lithuania) from 1799 until the Second World War, was the most successful and influential Jewish printing house of its era. Vilna, known as "the Jerusalem of Lithuania," earned its name thanks in part to its favorite son, the brilliant rabbi known as the Vilna Gaon. However, Vilna's reputation as a center of Jewish learning owes at least as much to Deborah Romm, who ran the printing house under the name "Widow and Brothers Romm," from 1860 until her death in 1903.

In the 1880s Deborah Romm oversaw the research and publication of a new, authoritative edition of the Babylonian Talmud. As Jennifer Breger writes, the Romm Edition "was a landmark in Hebrew printing; twenty-two thousand copies of the first volume were sold by advance subscription and this edition became a model for all later editions." Known simply as the "Vilna Shas,"<sup>1</sup> in seminaries and classrooms the Jewish world over, the Romm edition of the Talmud remains the enduring standard for this central text of religious Jewish life.

While we feature several publications of the Widow and Brothers Romm in our exhibition, the Judaica Collection of Western Washington University Libraries possesses neither a Romm Edition Talmud, nor many other historic Talmuds for that matter.

The first published extracts of the Talmud date back to 1483 and were printed

in Northern Italy by Joshua Solomon Soncino. In 1523, the non-Jewish printer Daniel Bomberg published the first complete edition of Babylonian Talmud in Venice, which (along with other Italian cities) had supplanted Constantinople as a center of Hebrew printing. Over the course of the 16th century, Venetian printers published of more than eight hundred Hebrew titles. Western



*Sixteenth-century Venetian Hebrew publications Avodat ha-Levi ("Service of the Levite," 1545) and Le-Khol Hefets ("For Every Purpose," 1552). Shown left is the title page of Le-Khol Hefets by Rabbi Eliezer Mili of Ferrara, which*

*instructs readers in the wording of religious contracts. On the right is a closeup of the title page of Avodat ha-Levi featuring the mark of printer Marco Antonio Giustiniani. This notable printer's mark depicts the Temple in Jerusalem and was "borrowed" by later printers such as Mordecai ben Gershom Katz (Prague) and Kalonymous ben Mordecai Jaffe (Lublin)."*

Libraries is fortunate to own three volumes of Judaica printed in 16th century Venice, including two printed by the Adelkinds, who prepared Hebrew texts for publication in the employ of Daniel Bomberg. However, the Talmud is not among these.

The books in our collections have much to teach about the Jewish diasporic experience, but so do the lacunae. Follow the books, but note the absences as well. What accounts for the paucity of Talmuds among Western Washington University's rare Judaica? Cognizant of how hard it is to explain an absence, I will nonetheless suggest a few different possibilities.

As for why our collection lacks early modern editions of the Talmud, the answer is straightforward and sad. Since the Middle Ages, the Talmud has been accused falsely of anti-Christian and obscene content, and subjected to censorship and attacks both literal and rhetorical. Between 1242's Disputation of Paris and the final "auto-de-fe" in 18th century Kamenets-Podolski

(current-day Ukraine), the Talmud was the target of numerous Papal bans, book burnings and orders of confiscation. The dominance of Italian Hebrew printing begun in the 16th century was arrested in 1553 by a Papal prohibition and burning of the Talmud. The Republic of Venice prohibited all Hebrew printing for ten years, finally lifting the ban in 1563. The remainder of the 16th century saw a succession of papal prohibitions on the printing and possession of the Talmud. By the time the storm had lifted, the center of Hebrew printing had shifted again—this time to the Amsterdam of the 17th century.

The Dutch Golden Age of the 17th century is the source of some of our collection's most striking volumes, including *Sefer Elim* ("Book of Palms"), by Joseph Solomon Delmedigo (1591-1655), a rabbi and mathematician who studied under Galileo Galilei. *Sefer Elim* was published in 1629 by Manasseh ben Israel, a masterful printer of Sephardic origin who in 1626 established



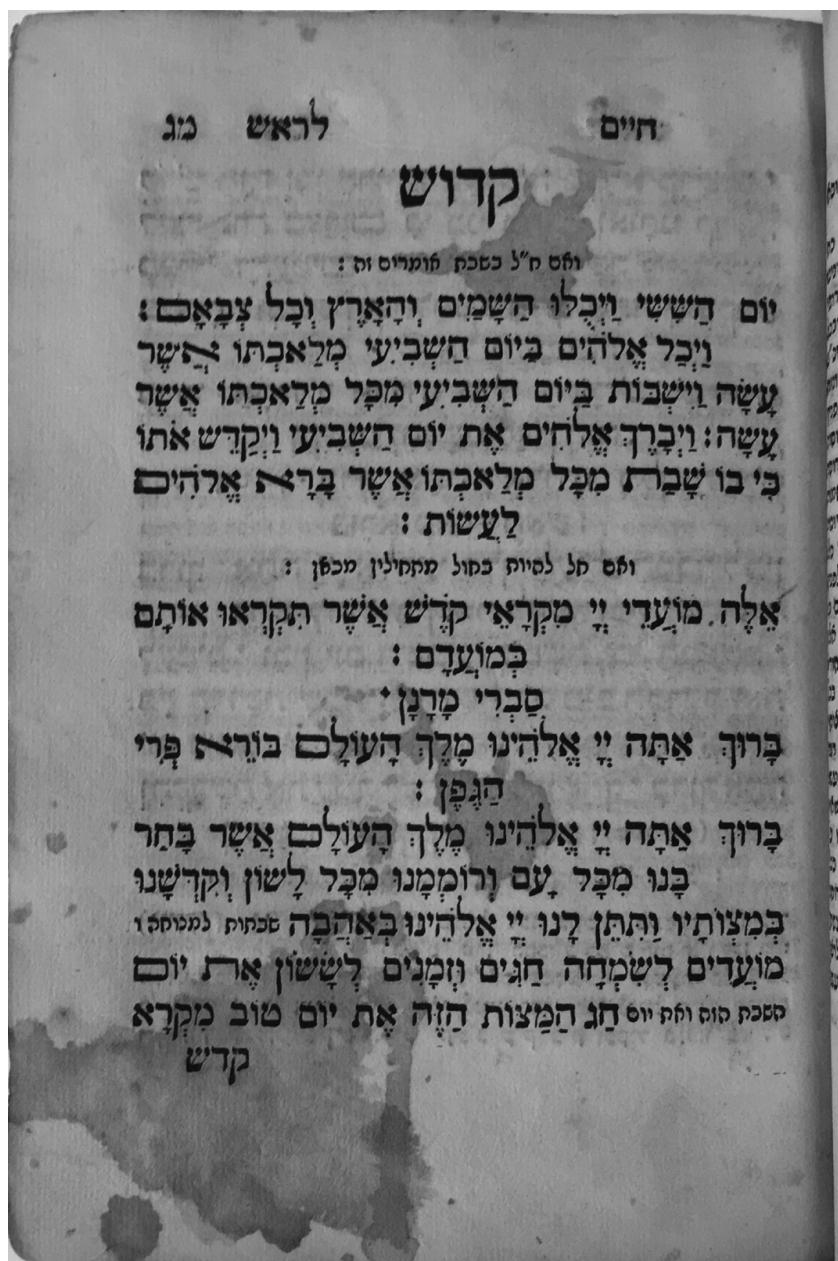
In form and content, the publications of printer Menassah ben Israel would influence Jewish books for centuries. *Sefer Elim*, by Joseph Solomon Delmedigo, Amsterdam, 1626.

Amsterdam's first Hebrew press. The subjects discussed in *Sefer Elim* include astronomy, physics, mathematics, medicine, and music theory. Delmedigo's impact reverberated down through the centuries, influencing his student and successor Baruch Spinoza, and 18th and 19th century Jewish Enlightenment thinkers such as Menachem Mendel Lefin (1749-1826).

Explaining the absence of the more recent, and far more numerous, Vilna Edition of the Talmud is more complicated. The Nazi Holocaust, bracketed by the First World War and Communist period's decimation of Eastern European

Jewry, bear their share of responsibility for the loss of books like those published by the Widow Romm. However, there is a less lachrymose explanation for their absence as well. In 2012, Dr. Emile Schrijver, Curator of Bibliotheca Rosenthaliana and Special Collections at University of Amsterdam, gave a lecture at the Library of Congress on the Jewish book since the invention of printing. In the midst of a humorous aside, Schrijver reveals something essential about the particular way Jewish books announce their importance within Jewish life:

*"[M]any Hebrew books actually tend to have, let's say, not-too-nice bindings. ... When we look at the books we're dealing with, in the Hebrew world, many of these books were actually used! When we look at medieval, non-Jewish,*



A wine-stained page of Sefer Hayyim la-Rosh by Hayyim Palaggi (Izmir: Jacob and Brothers, Sons of Samuel Ashkenazi, 1851-1852)

*manuscripts, many of them look as if they were never looked at! And that may well be true, in many cases. I mean, they were looked at, but they were never used to the extent that Jewish books were used. There are hardly any Hebrew books that do not show severe signs of use. And I know of 18th century Haggadot [plural of Haggadah, the text used at the Passover Seder], handwritten Haggadot, that don't have a single spot on them. They don't have wine stains on them, that don't have all the food remnants in them, and the only reason for that ... The reason is that they were never in Jewish hands. ... [a]nd were never used."*

Among my favorite items on display in our exhibition is just the sort of text to which Schrijver alludes. It is a book entitled *Sefer Hayyim la-Rosh*, printed in the mid-19th century Izmir (Smyrna) by the reputable printing family Ashkenazi. *Sefer Hayyim la-Rosh* combines commentary from the Turkish rabbinical authority Hayyim Palaggi with the text of the Haggadah, the soup-to-nuts manual for the family's yearly Passover seder. Predictably, and delightfully, upon opening the book to the Kiddush (the blessing over the wine), one encounters the faded splash of a wine stain; a spill, frozen in time.

It is possible that one reason the 1880s Vilna Shas eludes our collection is not because it has been destroyed, but because it has lived. Because it has been used. Because, perhaps, the copy that eludes us resides now in a house of study, both treasured and weathered. If that is the reason, it's one I can live with.



## Notes

Thank you to Special Collections Librarian Michael Taylor for sharing the quote from Rabbi Jonathan Sacks that opens this essay.

1. "Shas" is an acronym for the six books of the Mishnah, which makes up the core of the Talmud.

## About the author

David Schlitt is Judaica Project Archivist and Visiting Instructor of Yiddish at Western Washington University. He holds a graduate degree in history from the University of Michigan and is pursuing a Masters in Library and Information Science from Simmons University. Located in historic Wilson Library, WWU's Special Collections is a unit of the library's Division of Heritage Resources, which works to support teaching, learning and research through documenting the history of our community, region and world. David is a member of The Book Club of Washington.

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This issue has been typeset in Garamond, originally designed in the mid-sixteenth century by Claude Garamond (or Garamont) and Robert Granjon, designer of the italic; this Adobe version was reinterpreted by Robert Slimbach in 1989. The over masthead capitals were designed for the Curwen Press, London, in 1929, by Jan van Krimpen, Amsterdam.





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